
**Pacoima Town
Center Partners
A Community Concept**

Pacoima Town Center Partners

A Community Concept

Introduction

In 1997 when Mayor Richard Riordan initiated the Targeted Neighborhood Initiative (TNI) program he noted that “Angelenos care about their communities and understand the needs of their own neighborhoods. The Targeted Neighborhood Initiative is a perfect example of how public resources can be integrated with the drive and creativity of our communities to ensure that our City’s trend of revitalization continues into the next millennium. This program empowers communities to invent their future.”

The Pacoima community, empowered by the validation given by the Mayor, has created a community partnership to help guide the revitalization of the Van Nuys Boulevard commercial strip. Key to the success of our efforts is broad-based support from people that live, work and shop in downtown Pacoima. Central to our concept described herein is the “team approach,” which involves a network of community members, including community-based organizations, residents, business proprietors, employees and city staff.

The Concept

Successful revitalization efforts across the country have long recognized that outside resources will be much more effectively used if the local community is itself fully mobilized and invested, and if it can define the agendas for which additional resources will be obtained. The Pacoima community, brought together through TNI workshops, has decided to create a community partnership to serve as the central manager and coordinator of the revitalization process of our community. This partnership has become known as the Pacoima Town Center Partners. The Partners have used the Main Street Approach¹ as a model for creating a practical management strategy to transform the Pacoima Town Center into an economically viable commercial district.

The Pacoima Town Center Partners envision working closely with the TNI City Team to coordinate the resources, organizations and work activities associated with the commercial revitalization of the Pacoima community. The Pacoima Town Center Partners are key to the successful realization of the TNI goals and the revitalization of the Pacoima Town Center.

¹ The Main Street Approach was developed by the National Main Street Center (NMSC). The NMSC is a program of the National trust for Historic Preservation, which is the only national, private nonprofit organization chartered by Congress with the responsibility for encouraging public participation in the preservation of sites, buildings and objects significant in American history and culture.

The Pacoima Town Center Partners will also provide linkages between community groups, businesses, and public officials to create business opportunities, building community capacity, focusing debates on new strategic and policy development ideas, and providing a focus for sustaining community momentum. The Partners are exploring the possibility of becoming a nonprofit corporation as the organization evolves. The Pacoima Town Center Partners are prepared to play the central role in the revitalization process and to perform a variety of functions, which include:

- ◆ **Central Coordination.** The Pacoima Town Center Partners will serve as a liaison to all community groups and coordinate the entire development process. This coordination will be effectuated through the organizational structure described below and the hiring of a Community Manager to oversee the day to day operations of the project.
- ◆ **Generating Neighborhood Support.** The Pacoima Town Center Partners will be primarily responsible for introducing and selling the commercial revitalization concept to the rest of the community. This can be a difficult task given that some community residents, property owners and merchants may be apathetic at the outset. Problems with absentee owners, lack of credit, rent increases and vandalism often discourage merchants from making improvements in their shops.
- ◆ **Representing Neighborhood Interest.** Outside parties such as federal and local governmental agencies and private investors need to know that the community as a whole has been involved in developing the revitalization plan and approves of them.
- ◆ **Long Term Community Planning.** The Pacoima Town Center Partners will develop a comprehensive vision for the revitalization of the Pacoima Town Center. The Partners will also develop a long term funding plan, leveraging TNI monies with other public and private funds.

Pacoima Town Center Partners

The collaborative for this project is comprised of representatives from private, public and government entities. The partners include Pacoima Beautiful, Valley Economic Development Center, Pacoima residents and business owners, San Fernando Valley Neighborhood Legal Services (SFVNLS), the Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency and the Offices of the City of Los Angeles Councilmember Richard Alarcon and the Mayor Richard Riordan. (See Attachment "A" for Organizational Chart) The San Fernando Valley Neighborhood Legal Services is a non-profit organization currently serving the legal needs of residents of the City of Los Angeles. Their role will be one of administrator and fiscal agent for the project. Pacoima Beautiful will serve as design and streetscape experts. Valley Economic Development Center will provide their business assistance expertise. The Community Redevelopment Agency, which has been instrumental in the development of this program concept, will continue to provide technical assistance, expert development advise and function as a liaison between the Partners

and the City TNI team. City of Los Angeles Councilman Richard Alarcon's office will play an oversight role as well, ensure that the project serves the needs of the residents of his District. The Mayor's office will continue to be an active participant in the program, assisting in the implementation of the Pacoima Town Center.

All the partners for this project have worked together in a variety of capacities over the last several years. Each partner brings to the collaborative a different perspective and valuable insight resources and expertise. This partnership embodies and reflects the type of relationships and partnerships that will be made possible through this project to effect positive change in the Pacoima Town Center.

Organizational Structure and Governance

As previously stated, the Pacoima Town Center Partners have model their efforts on the Main Street Approach. The Main Street program's goal is to make historic and traditional commercial buildings and districts economically viable once again. It does this through comprehensive, incremental, and carefully coordinated work in four key areas, know as the Main Street Four-Point Approach. The four areas are:

- ◆ **Organization** focuses on building a framework for sensible volunteer-driven programming and organizational structure that matches the community's assets and potential.
- ◆ **Promotion** involves marketing the town center's unique characteristics to shoppers, investors, new businesses and others.
- ◆ **Design** contributes to improving the town center's image by enhancing its physical appearance.
- ◆ **Economic Development** means strengthening the existing economic base of the town center while diversifying it.

Closely following the recommended Main Street Approach, the Pacoima Town Center Partners have established an organizational structure in order to begin operations. (See Attachment A, Organizational Chart) At the outset the organization has been a relatively fluid group, consisting of key people in the neighborhood and the business community. This core group has been responsible for getting things off the ground and also generating a broad base of support.

As the organization has evolved, it has taken on a more permanent structure. The founding members adopted bylaws on August 28, 1998. (See Attachment B, Pacoima Town Center Partners Bylaws) The partnership is organized into an Executive Committee and three Subcommittees: Promotion, Design and Economic Development.

Executive Committee

To oversee the operation of the revitalization of the community, the Pacoima Town Center Partners have established a ten member Executive Committee. Four members of the Executive Committee are from the business community, three members are residents of the Pacoima community, two members are from community based organizations and one member is a representative of the Seventh Council District. The duties of the Executive Committee include establishing program priorities, monitoring program implementation, hiring consultants, overseeing the Community Manager and developing a funding plan in order to leverage TNI dollars. The Executive Committee also serves as means for coordinating community concerns and ideas on economic and physical development strategies and priorities. The Executive Committee meets at least twice a month. Minutes are kept of each Executive Committee Meeting and are open for review by members of the community.

Subcommittees

The Executive Committee coordinates the work of all Subcommittees. A member of the Executive Committee chairs each Subcommittee. Membership on any subcommittee is open to any community stakeholder. Additionally, each Subcommittee includes persons from outside the community who possess needed skills or represent key organizations. The Subcommittees coordinate various phases of the revitalization process. The Subcommittees meet monthly to devise a work plan specific to their function. (See Attachment C, Promotion Committee Work Plan). This work plan is submitted to the Executive Committee for its review and approval. Minutes are kept of each subcommittee and are open for review by members of the community.

Promotion Subcommittee

Caron Caines, an Attorney at SFVNLS, chairs the Promotion Subcommittee. Other members of the subcommittee include: Teresa Delgado, John F. Perenia, Marc & Marci Lavallee, Mary Lou Steinfeld, Gwen Bentley, Jesus & Felipe Escobar, Maria Cano, Greg Wesley, Angie De Leon, Luis Quevedo, Isaac Arias, Marie Harris, Blas Payan, and Israel Ortiz. This subcommittee has already begun to plan for a clean-up day along Van Nuys Blvd, a Pacoima street fair and a logo contest to kick off the Pacoima Town Center revitalization. These activities are designed to excite the community, market existing businesses and attract shoppers, new businesses and investors. Other activities of the committee include identifying all merchants along Van Nuys Blvd. and developing a district marketing strategy.

Design Subcommittee

Marlene Grossman, the Executive Director of Pacoima Beautiful chairs the Design subcommittee. Other members of this committee include: Joe Lopez, George Pierce, William J.

Bryant, Jon F. Perenia, Teresa Delgado, Allan Wesley, Marc & Marci Lavalley, Marilyn Steinfeld, Marie Harris, Blas Payan, Gwen Bentley, Israel Ortiz, Issac Arias and Deborah Perez. This committee is currently developing design standards for the commercial rehabilitation and façade improvements, infrastructure and streetscape improvements contemplated for the neighborhood.

Economic Development

Dan Morales of Valley Economic Development Center, chairs this subcommittee, which focuses on business retention, expansion and attraction. Other members of the Economic Development subcommittee include John Perenia, Marc Lavalley, Jose Angus, Teresa Delgado, George Pierce, John Hunter and Gwen Bentley. The subcommittee is exploring the most effective structuring of the planned business improvement commercial loans and grants. The Subcommittee is also exploring the venture development process. Venture development is a screening process, which systematically separates the best business opportunities from other less promising ones. This will enable the Partners to sharpen their focus and concentrate resources on the community's most viable business opportunities.

Community Manager

The Community Manager will oversee all day to day operations of the project. Responsibilities will include ensuring that the budget and timetable targets are met, completing project reports, evaluating project progress and supervising the project volunteers.

Fiscal Agent

SFVNLS² will function as the Partner's fiscal agent. The Executive Committee must approve all expenditures. Additionally, SFVNLS will, as a sub-recipient of TNI funds, ensure that all appropriate reports are made to the Community Development Department. SFVNLS is a nonprofit law firm founded in 1965 to provide free legal services to low-income communities in the City of Los Angeles. SFVNLS, with an annual operating budget of about 2.5 million dollars, provides legal assistance to more than 12,000 families annually in a variety of civil areas. SFVNLS has long been a recipient of Community Development Block Grant funds.

² SFVNLS undergoes an annual audit by an independent accounting firm. SFVNLS has always performed very well during its audit. Results of the audit are available for review.

Budget and Work Plan

The following delineates the Partners' budget and work plan. Included in the Program Delivery costs are the salary for the Community Manager and the SFVNLS administrative charge of 5%.

♦ COMMERCIAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

Creating the Pacoima Town Center requires a well-rounded program that includes improving the community environment as well as the businesses along Van Nuys Boulevard. In order to support the businesses the program will include the development of a business revitalization action plan that will result in the design of the rehabilitation program that will assist the business and property owners. The loan program will provide assistance to those businesses interested in expanding, improving or relocating in the area. The revolving loan funds can also be used to meet the code-required improvements that may be discovered during the façade improvement. The action plan will also include a promotion component that will attract the businesses to participate in the program and will attract shoppers and investors to the area.

Program Delivery	\$ 82,500
Marketing	\$ 75,000
Loan Program	\$ 392,500
PROGRAM TOTAL	\$ 550,000

♦ COMMERCIAL FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

This program provides for the development of a façade improvement program for the renovation, repair or improvement of the storefronts along Van Nuys Blvd. This program will include the development of design guidelines, which will be developed by the community in cooperation with a designer that will assist in the façade improvement designs.

Program Delivery	\$ 97,500
Design Services	\$ 52,000
Façade Grants	\$ 500,00
PROGRAM TOTAL	\$ 650,000

◆ ***STREETSCAPE DESIGN AND IMPROVEMENTS***

To enhance the visual environment and set the Pacoima Town Center apart from the remaining miles of Van Nuys Boulevard, the streetscape program will include the development of an urban design plan which may provide for: an entry gateway, coordinated street signs and banners, the placement of street trees, planters, decorative crosswalks, coordinated signage, bus shelters and improved bus information, signage and pedestrian lighting. The program will include the implementation of the streetscape design and installation of street furniture along with a clean-up campaign, which will include: the placement of trash cans and pick-up, the steam cleaning of sidewalks and the repair of broken, curbs and sidewalks.

Program Delivery	\$ 15,000
Construction Management	\$ 35,000
Streetscape Design Specifications	\$ 50,000
Streetscape Improvements	\$ 300,000
PROGRAM TOTAL	\$ 400,000

Implementation Schedule and Timeline

Months 1 through 3:

1. Pacoima Town Center Partners will execute an MOU with SFVNLS.
2. The Pacoima Town Center partners, in collaboration with New Directions for Youth, Clean and Green, Pacoima Beautiful, and the offices of Council Member Richard Alarcon and Mayor Richard Riordan, will host a clean-up day along Van Nuys Blvd.
3. The Executive Committee will formulate a detailed implementation plan, which will include quality control mechanisms and a monitoring schedule.
4. Job description for the Community Manager will be developed. Job description will be posted and applicants recruited.
5. A design consultant will be selected through a competitive bid process.
6. A financial resource development plan to ensure sustainability of the project will begin to be written by the Executive Committee, which will include fund raising objectives with time-phased activities and responsibilities.

7. Pacoima Town Center subcommittees and other volunteers will be trained. Volunteers will be given a thorough orientation on the project and their job responsibilities.
8. The Promotion Subcommittee will develop the promotional materials to be used to inform community organizations about the project. The materials used to promote the project will be in both English and Spanish, will be culturally sensitive and effectively communicate the purpose and intended outcomes of the project.
9. The Promotion Subcommittee will survey business along the Boulevard informing them of the Project and assessing their needs.
10. Community Manager will be hired. Office space will be secured.

Months 4 through 6:

1. All activities begun in the first three months will continue, including contacting community stakeholders.
2. Pacoima Street Fair event will take place.
3. Logo Contest will be held.
4. Design guidelines will be adopted.
5. Guidelines for commercial rehabilitation and façade improvement loan and grant program will be written. First loan and grants will be made.
6. Streetscape Design plan will be adopted.

Months 6 through 12

1. All loan and grant programs will be fully operational.
2. Town Center Partners will hold a town hall meeting to report to community stakeholders. Special efforts will be made to recruit members to the partnership.
3. All committees will continue to function.
4. Streetscape improvements will be initiated, which may include angled parking, adding an attractive median and the placement of street furniture.

Months 12 through 18

1. All activities will continue.
2. The Community Manager will complete first annual evaluation.
3. Program priorities will be established for the second year.
4. Financial support for the second year will be secured.
5. The Executive Committee will evaluate the Community Manager.
6. Community Town Hall Meeting will be held.
7. Pacoima Town Center will be aggressively promoted to potential new business, shoppers and investors.

Months 18 through 36

1. All activities will continue.
2. Second and third annual Pacoima Town Center Street Fairs will be held.
3. Overall activities will be evaluated with input from the community stakeholders and a financial support plan for the third year will be established.
4. Responsibilities of the project partners are defined in terms of ongoing support or technical assistance.
5. Areas needing ongoing fiscal support will be identified and outside support will be sought, including exploring the possibility of developing a Business Improvement District.
6. All required reports will be completed.
7. Partners will evaluate all progress to date and future goals, including possibility of developing into a non-profit corporation.

Sustainability

The Pacoima Town Center Partners are fully confident that after the initial three year TNI period, the revitalization efforts can be sustained. The Partners will seek financial assistance for operating costs from foundations, federal and local government sources and financial institutions. Care will be taken, however, to maintain the revitalization work as the first priority of the organization.

Additionally, loan funds from initial commercial rehabilitation programs will begin to be repaid to the organization. Other potential funding sources exist since the project area is also part of a CRA Project area and LA's Empowerment Zone. Also, the Executive Committee will explore establishing a Business Improvement District in the Pacoima TNI.

Community Involvement

Many residents do not participate in community and civic affairs due to their feelings of powerlessness to implement change. This apathy can be eliminated if community residents see that they have a means of voicing their needs and opinions and are being heard by community groups, politicians and the government. The Pacoima Town Center Partners are committed to maintaining a high level of community involvement in the evaluation of the Town Center.

The Pacoima Town Center Partners grew out of a series of community meetings. The Partners have been dedicated to continuing the community participation. Several Community meetings were held to flesh out the partnership concept and to recruit community volunteers. (See Attached "D", Community Meeting Material Packets.)

Evaluation

The Executive Committee and the Community Manager will regularly evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the Project. The evaluation of the project will be based on the following criteria:

- Effectiveness of the revitalization project
- Impact of the project on the community
- Tangible and intangible measurable outcomes of the project
- Annual Progress toward meeting project goals and objectives
- Positive changes in the Pacoima community influenced by the project
- Ability of the project to be replicated

The Community Manager will conduct meetings and focus groups with the community-based businesses, organizations and community residents affected by the project.

Conclusion

The Pacoima Town Center Partners have established a strong organizational base whose cornerstone is Pacoima organizations, businesses and residents. The organization is representative of the entire neighborhood, but at the same time it has a strong business component enabling it to handle commercial revitalization efforts.

This project will truly empower the stakeholders of this community by improving their economic situation and stopping the decline of the community by providing them with the opportunity to become involved in civic life and providing them with the information and tools necessary to implement their desired changes. We will revitalize our Pacoima Town Center!